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Christian Culture and — Latin¹

BY THE MOST REVEREND SAMUEL A. STRITCH
Archbishop of Chicago

That we must be always alert in safeguarding against noxious novelties and short-sighted innovators the substance of Christian culture is so evident these days that it is hard for the thinking man to find a reason for our suffering in the recent past the incursions which have been made into the domain of our secondary and higher education. We do not for an instant entertain the illusion that Christian culture is static and must be transmitted unchanged from generation to generation. On the contrary, we hold it to be a dynamic force which through successive social changes takes on new phases without however losing its substance. Its very characteristic is its adaptability to new conditions without a loss of its nature. Foolish indeed it would be to fail to recognize the need in our classrooms of contemporary changed and changing social facts and phenomena. If the school is a truly educative factor, it must not only envision the actual world about it, but out of a very knowledge of this world seek in some realistic way to draw the plans and specifications of a better tomorrow. It were a tragedy, were educators so factual as to limit their efforts to effecting some sort of compromise between life and existing social reality. There must be in a good sense visionaries who help the making of an ideal, which worn and marred by the attrition of tomorrow's realities, will be the inspiration for better living. In all this, they must keep in mind the principles of social continuity as well as successive changes. The mountain torrent races down the mountainside splashing and foaming over rocks and boulders, then briskly courses over green meadows, joins company with other brisk streams and becomes the sedate river bearing commerce on its bosom and scattering its beneficences along its way. As you stand on the bridge in the great city and look down on its sedate flow, your thoughts are far from its play and antics as it came down the mountainside. Yet amid all its changes, there is a sameness. Rocks and boulders and cliffs and wide banks and even man's dams never take from it this sameness. So, there is a sameness in Christian culture which does not militate against the variety of forms and grandeur of reflections which it takes on in changing environments.

Now today we see about us the sorry sight of theories and systems which would bestow a better portion of social well-being, without a thought to the constant which is the very soul of our western civilization. If the things we cherish most in our social ideals are to survive, we must not forget this constant. Since the school is a mighty factor in shaping the progress of our Christian culture, it must fix deeply in the mind of its students the constant of it as well as the flux.

We may ask ourselves with benefit: What are the components of the constant in Christian culture? At once we answer that the element which gives it being, is the Christian Idea. Take this away from it and you will find that its notion of man and society, rights and responsibilities, charity and justice, prudence and temperance, fortitude and patience is gone and with it freedom, enterprise, and rightly limited government as we understand them. But since we are thinking about Christian culture as it has manifested itself in western civilization, we must add to the Christian Idea other component elements. There is what we may call Roman Humanities. By this term we understand the good fruits of Roman genius wedded to the best of Greek philosophies—Roman law, Roman literature, Roman art, and Roman engineering science. All of us are Romans. The very language we speak, the buildings we live in, the law that protects us, the art that best expresses us, are profoundly influenced by ancient Rome. Then there is the third element. For want of a better term let me call it the Gothic Idea. Northern Europe profoundly influenced Roman Humanities as it was influenced by them. When the best of the Roman and the best of the Goth were baptized, western civilization, as we know and cherish it, was born. The Christian commonwealth into which there were admitted Latin and Norman, Iberian and Gaul, Teuton and Slav, Briton and Celt, preserved the best of Roman culture and became Christian Europe.

From all this it follows that to preserve the constant in our culture we must keep alive a familiarity of our educated minds with the best fruits of Roman Humanities. It seems to me, two reasons demand this. First, without it we cannot interpret rightly our own literature, art, law, and ways of thinking. Secondly, without it we are intellectually aliens to the liturgy and law and literature of the great unifying force of true Western culture, the Church.

Now I do not think that there is need of any demonstration of the fact that without an acquaintance with the Latin classics and the fundamentals of Roman law and customs and general Roman history, European or Western civilization is an enigma. Nor is proof required to show that Latin is the language of the Church. The Sacred Congregation of Studies in an Instruction to the Bishops of the Church of July 1, 1908, wrote: "In primis, quod maximi momenti et ponderis est, notari atque animadverti volumus, linguam latinam jure meritoque dici et esse linguam Ecclesiae propriam. Et profecto hac lingua si quando necessitas exigit, Sacerdotes disunctarum diversarumque civitatum colloqui et scribere inter se solent ad sensa mentis pandenda, quae aliter inter se pandere non possent. Hac lingua, in quam sacri libri veteris novique Testamenti versi sunt, Clerus canonicas recitat preces, Sacrum facit omnesque sacros

ritus et caeremonias, quas liturgia praescribit, exequitur. Quin etiam hac lingua Summus Pontifex et Sacra Concilia Ecclesiae negotiis curandis in litteris actisque omnibus edendis utuntur. Accedit quod suos doctissimos libros Sancti Patres Ecclesiaeque Doctores Latini scripsere, eos et huic linguae commendarunt."

That the study of Latin and the Latin classics, with the study of Roman history, should have in our Western tradition a central place in the curriculum of our high schools and colleges is not strange, but in keeping with a clear understanding of their objective and purpose. Catholic high schools and colleges, if they fail to place proper emphasis on Latin studies, abdicate in large part their mission and cast away the fullness of their opportunity.

With the advances in the natural sciences and the consequent enriching of the curricula of our high schools and colleges, shallow educators, blinded by the brilliance of new discoveries and marvelous inventions, forgot the continuity of Christian culture and relegated to an insignificant place in their curricula Latin studies and indeed even ancient history. With an appreciation of the true value of the human element forced on them by the consequences of their mistake, we see them now giving history its rightful place, and soon we hope that Latin studies will regain their proper importance.

Here in the United States our Catholic schools of higher learning yielded to this trend and, forgetting the full breadth of their mission, shamefully took up the notion that you can hold on to the constant of western civilization with a substitution of mere skills and natural science for Latin studies and history.

I confess that for a long time this fact has greatly disturbed me. To find a remedy for so great an evil has been my preoccupation. After much thought and consultation I have decided to hold, several times a year, directly under my supervision, conferences of all Latin teachers of the Catholic high schools of this Archdiocese. My intention is to make these conferences a Forum for the discussion of all the problems of these teachers from which they will recommend to me action and programs for a restoration of Latin studies to their rightful place in our high schools.

¹ [An address delivered by His Excellency, when still Archbishop of Milwaukee, at a meeting of the Latin teachers of the Catholic high schools of that Archdiocese.]

Saint Ambrose as a Writer

BY SISTER MARY DOROTHEA, S. S. N. D.
Mount Mary College, Milwaukee

It is not as a man of letters that St. Ambrose has won his fame, but as bishop of Milan. A Roman patrician, possessed of an energetic will, persevering purpose, and an appreciation of the real and practical things of life, he accomplished his work not in quiet seclusion as a student of research, but in the front ranks of Church and State. In an eminent degree, he was first and foremost a man of action. Milan knew what it possessed in its bishop. The poor and needy saw in him a father, the weak and oppressed looked to him as a protector, while to the high and mighty he was counsellor and friend. At times he is seen superintending the charities

of the Church, then ransoming captives or pardoning recreants, and, finally, in the role of diplomat, arbitrating for his sovereigns, or hurling anathemas against the heretics of the day. St. Ambrose stands out in bold relief as one of the most powerful and magnetic personalities of the fourth century.

Considering this life of intense activity, then, it is not to be wondered at that St. Ambrose did not accomplish much that was particularly great either in scholarship or theology. He had not the intellectual powers of an Augustine, nor the speculative and systematic mind of an Origen. His interests were not so much in the solution of metaphysical problems: his great ideal and objective was to explain and safeguard Christian doctrine. And yet, despite his manifold duties, he found leisure for an extensive literary activity, the fruits of which have preserved his name for posterity. Obviously, the literary legacy of so eminently practical a man cannot be classed as literature of the first rank, for most of his writings were the outgrowth of his ministerial and preaching activity. The student of literature will not find in them the splendor of language, the grandeur of style, and perhaps the originality of thought, that are so often found in the works of the great orators. And yet, he will probably be willing to concede that St. Ambrose was an orator of no little merit. His diction is simple, his style virile, and his arguments are developed in orderly sequence. If at times elegance and grace are wanting, it is in all probability due to his lack of leisure for the cultivation of an artistic prose.

Perhaps another striking limitation in our author, according to modern literary standards, was his constant practice of plagiarism. The conventions of the time, however, contrary to the theory of classical imitation in previous centuries, allowed for plagiarizing that today would meet with the harshest criticism. Philo and Origen, though rarely mentioned by name, are the habitual guides of St. Ambrose in exegesis; Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, Didymus, Epiphanius, and Gregory Nazianzen in moral and dogmatic teachings. How intimately acquainted he was with the classical writers and with Greek philosophy is shown by his numerous references and borrowings from Greek philosophers and Greek and Latin authors. References to Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Hippocrates, Thales, the Stoics and Epicureans, Homer and Euripides, abound in his writings, and borrowings from Roman writers are met with at every turn. In his excellent monograph, *Vergils Einfluss bei den Kirchenschriftstellern der vorviktorianischen Periode*, Bürner has shown that Virgil was a particular favorite for imitation among the ante-Nicene Fathers. In the schools of the fourth and fifth centuries, too, Virgil held the foremost place. In the schools of rhetoric, for instance, the classical authors were not only carefully studied and memorized, but actually formed the foundation of general culture. Hence we find both pagan and Christian writers, and among them St. Ambrose, interweaving an exceptionally great number of Virgilian phrases and thoughts into their own works. In his minute and varied accounts of the habits of animals, be they beast, bird, insect, or reptile, he skillfully introduces reminiscences or verbal imitations which echo

in more than a hundred passages the works of Virgil. In general, when he is not directly concerned with ethical or moral exposition, but is portraying the beauties of nature, or drawing life portraits, his discourse often shows great poetic beauty and reveals more than ordinary rhetorical skill. The subjects of his discourse, notably in the *Hexameron*, invite a lofty style, and when he speaks of the sea, of the flowers of the field, the delights of the husbandman, and of the 'joyous crops,' the passages often reach the level of poetry. (Cf. *Ex.* III. 5. 21 ff.; V. 11; IV. 6. 26.)

Of all the writings of St. Ambrose, his contributions to Christian hymnology have been of the greatest significance in the domain of literature. His metrical compositions, among them four great hymns (*Deus Creator Omnium*, a hymn of eventide; *Aeterne Rerum Conditor*, a morning anthem; *Iam Surgit Hora Tertia*, assigned to Terce; *Intende Qui Regis Israel*, [*Veni Redemptor Gentium*], a Christmas hymn), are the mature fruit of that process of assimilation of the ancient culture witnessed in the Church of the early ages. His hymns were written in the acatalectic iambic dimeter, arranged in strophes of four verses each.

If the writings of St. Ambrose in their entirety cannot be classed as artistic productions of the first rank, they nevertheless merit distinction. A language and style that proved the providential means of attracting so great a genius as the pagan Augustine, himself versed in the art of speaking, must have been effective indeed—*et studiose audiebam disputantem* [*Ambrosium*] *in populo, et verò eius suspendebam intentus, rerum autem incuriosus et contemptor adstabam et delectabar suavitate sermonis* (Conf. V 13). In contrast to pagan rhetoric with its frequently empty phraseology and trifling content, St. Ambrose based his discourses on the solid food provided by the Scriptures. Still, like St. Augustine, he does not refrain from using the oratorical devices of the ancients. Rich metaphors, striking similes, and an abundance of common figures of speech, occur frequently. An 'energetic terseness and bold originality of expression' characterize his writings, which rank him a Tacitus among the Latin Fathers. His sermons preserve a refined dignity, an echo of his own *gravitas*. An heir to the old Roman eloquence, he had the power of Roman oratory which he brought with him from the tribunals to the Church. He was not unfittingly called the Roman Cicero.

The following works may be consulted: J. du Frische et N. le Nourry, *Sancti Ambrosii Opera Omnia*: 2 vols. Paris, 1686-1690; Niederhuber, J., *Des hl. Kirchenlehrers Ambrosius von Mailand Hexameron*: Kempten, 1914; Förster, T., *Ambrosius, Bischof von Mailand*: Halle, 1884; de Labriolle, P., *Saint Ambroise*: Paris, 1908; Diederich, Sr. Mary Dorothea, *Vergil in the Works of St. Ambrose*: Washington, 1931; Kuhnmueller, Otto J., S. J., *Early Christian Latin Poets*: Chicago, 1929; Rand, E. K., *Founders of the Middle Ages*: Harvard U. Press, 1928; Dudden, F. Homes, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*: 2 vols. London, 1935.

No useless endeavor to depose the classical writers from the spheres where they have a right to reign leads us to remark that just as Herodotus and Livy must yield to Luke and John in the sphere of history, so must Homer and Virgil yield to the writers of the *Dies Irae* and the *Stabat Mater*. Between the classical and the

Christian writers, what an abyss! But it is the abyss bridged over by the pathetic *catabasis* of the Eternal Word.—Vincent McNabb

Cicero's Oratorical Education, a little pamphletlike volume of thirty-seven pages by Francis A. Sullivan, S. J., is planned "to aid college students, particularly those who study the speeches of Cicero, with an inspiring introduction to Cicero, the Orator." There is an introduction of five pages, followed by the Latin text of the *Brutus* (under the headings "Early Years," "The Young Lawyer," "The Tour Abroad," "Early Political Life," and "After the Consulship"), fifteen pages of carefully conceived notes, and two pages of "Practical Suggestions" to teachers. The booklet is definitely serviceable and may well be used if only for rapid reading in a phase of Cicero's writings too often neglected. (New York; Fordham University Press; 1940. \$0.50.)

The fourth number of *Vergilius*, (*The Bulletin of the Vergilian Society*, February, 1940) under the able editorship of Professor C. L. Highbarger of Northwestern University, lives up to the tradition wisely established by its three predecessors. As the organ of a society including both the layman and the scholarly initiate in Vergilian lore, it again makes a judicious combination of the popular and the learned. The editor contributes "Memorials of Vergil" and "Editorial Notes"; George E. Duckworth appears with "Turnus as a Tragic Character," George McCracken with "Unpublished Inscriptions from Tusculum," Dorothy M. Schullian with "The Dido and Aeneas Tapestries in Cleveland," A. D. Richardson III with "Dido and Aeneas, a Play." "The Reviews and Book Notices," as well as the listings of "Recent Works on Vergil," are edited by George E. Duckworth. There are also nine illustrations and plates. It is to be hoped that both the Vergilian Society and *Vergilius* will appeal to a constantly growing group. Saint Louis University

WILLIAM CHARLES KORFMACHER

Veris Triumphus

Urbes, rus, iuga saxea
Fulgurant nive candida;
Prata victa gelu rigent:
Cuncta strata venusta!

Campis fervidioribus
Canori volucrum chori,
Algidis profugi plagis,
Beant carmine palmas.

Bruma cor tibi deprimit?
Ut noctem superat dies,
Vires sic Boreae feras
Vincent robora Veris:

Ceres atque Favonius
Agris restituent decus;
Arbores foliis tegent
Nidulos merularum.

Bruma quos tenuit domi,
Campos mox virides petent;
Tandem carcere liberi
Laeta cantica fundent.

E Schola Campiana

A. F. GEYSER, S. J.

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St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.

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Editorial

Latin Teachers Institutes are coming into vogue more and more. Usually they are held in conjunction with the regular Summer Session, and their tonic effect, too, is much like that of the annual 'Retreat' in the summer. Announcements of such Institutes have reached us from the University of Texas and from St. Louis University. For details apply, respectively, to Professor W. J. Battle, Austin, Texas, and to Dean Mallon, St. Louis, Mo.

A committee of the American Classical League has been appointed to study and report on the methods that are now being used and that might be used to attract high school students to study Latin and college students to continue their study of Latin and begin the study of Greek. High school and college teachers who have data and suggestions of this sort are urged to communicate with the chairman of the committee, Professor Walter R. Agard, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

A book of unusual interest, just off the press, is *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, by Benjamin Farrington (Oxford U. Press; N. Y. \$2.50). The somewhat cryptic title is explained by the sentence: "The development of Science was violently interfered with by Politics."

Holy Cross College cordially invites the readers of the CLASSICAL BULLETIN to the presentation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Coloneus* in Greek, May 17 and 19, at 4:00 P. M.

No method for testing ideas has ever been devised as good as that which Socrates devised, and no age has ever needed that method more than our own. But he has not been reincarnated in our generation, and one of its tragedies is that when it needed a Socrates it got a Shaw.—R. W. Livingstone

Sophists, Ancient and Modern (II)

By F. STUART CRAWFORD
Miami University

Most systematic and unblushing of the modern sophists are the apostles of pragmatism, who like Protagoras deny the very existence of abstract universal principles of truth, and value only the empirically useful, although, less courageously than Socrates's opponent, they retain the terms *true* and *false*, while denying them any other significance than *useful* and *useless*.

Now this is obviously the sort of philosophy to appeal to the practical man; and it is particularly wide-spread in America today, the home of the most practically-minded people in history. It is significant that America's two most influential philosophers have both been pragmatists—William James and John Dewey.

More insidious forms of modern sophism are those sincere but deluded pseudo-sciences which mistake for valid principles what are in fact only the data of limited experience, or inductive generalizations which cannot be valid because they deal with the human soul, which is not susceptible of investigation by the methods of natural science. Now induction is the legitimate procedure of the natural sciences, but the laws of human conduct must be investigated rather by the deductive process exemplified by mathematics. The concrete utility of the natural sciences, and the impressive progress made in recent times in applying scientific discoveries to practical needs have tended to spread an exaggerated idea of the all-sufficiency of the inductive process, and a contempt for the mathematical and philosophic method. Most people today have little respect for or patience with the laborious process of rigid abstract reasoning back to fundamental axioms and postulates.

One consequence of this is the change in the nature of approach to certain fields of study. Psychology, economics, and politics, which used to be merely branches of philosophy, now set themselves up as independent sciences and flatter themselves that they employ the methods of the natural sciences. Yet in practice, since the nature of their material prevents them from drawing uncontroversial generalizations by induction, and they are most reluctant to become abstract, they are thrown back upon the necessity of adopting as their foundations not eternal first principles, but temporary conditions, practical needs, prejudices, and sentiments. The result is inevitably a chaos of conflicting and ever-changing conclusions. The so-called 'social scientists' of our day are the exact counterparts of the Protagoras who believed he could teach social virtue although he had not enquired into the fundamental nature of virtue. At best their recommendations, like his, can only be temporary solutions of immediate specific problems, and can provide no lasting satisfactory rules of social or individual conduct.

We thus find a large and influential portion of mankind today, especially in America, either refusing to believe in the existence of absolute first principles, or declining to bother with them, because of impatience with the laborious mental effort necessary in order to discover and apply them, and a desire for more immediate tangible solutions. The sophist's attitude is typified by a

remark made within the year by a member of the Cabinet of the United States in reply to criticisms of a certain decision in a labor dispute. "I am personally fed up," she said, "with the idea that a certain agreement or understanding or method that is practical and wholesome, and which binds men together and makes men work cooperatively may have metaphysical or ideological implications."

The idea that a solution, practical at the moment, is at least harmless even though it may not be based on any consistent fundamental theory is extremely dangerous. How different the attitude of Socrates, who would not let his friend Crito even use language that implied a wrong conception of metaphysics. You will all recall that when Crito, in the last hours of Socrates's life asked, "How do you want us to bury you?" the reply was, "You'll have to catch me first," and after reminding his friend that he could not bury Socrates, but only his body, that wisest of all men ended, "Let me assure you that calling things by incorrect names is not only wrong in itself, but it has a bad effect on our souls."

Now the practical solution that neglects theory may often be in fact perfectly in accord with theory, but the neglect of the theory gets us into bad habits. We become so accustomed to employing rules of action that are based merely on the test of experience that we lose the inclination and ability to validate rules by the more essential test of deductive reasoning. Let me quote another typical sophistry of today, this time in the words of a professor of education advocating a 'streamlined' curriculum: "The computing machine, interest tables and other 'fingertip' methods of solving once-hard problems have done away with the need for much of the old 'rithmetic . . . In a world of automatic calculators the use of numbers has changed. Eleven gallons of gasoline at 16 8/10 cents a gallon; we know where the attendant finds the answer and we usually know it will be correct." In the face of this statement, I cannot improve on the comment of Walter Lippmann. "As an indicator," he says, "of what is most deeply and dangerously wrong with the modern world, the professor's statement could hardly, I think, be more exact."

Yet we all know that the professor's attitude is a dominant one in the schools of education in our country. And so we find in modern education a growing neglect of the study of first principles, and at the same time an alarming increase in the popularity of subjects which cannot yield any permanently sound conclusions unless they are based on a thorough respect for and familiarity with fundamentals. I do not mean to belittle the importance of political and economic studies, but I do firmly contend, with Plato, that such study is futile and positively dangerous without first discovering and applying deductively and consistently more elementary principles of conduct. That social studies should have any part in secondary education, before the student has considered basic problems of metaphysics and ethics, is not only absurd, but perilous.

Now, whether the high-school student is mature enough to comprehend these more fundamental problems of philosophy is highly doubtful, but he could at least be prepared for their study, and there are two types of

subjects indispensable for such preparation,—languages and mathematics. Their value at the high-school level is twofold,—as tools, concerning which I need say no more here, and as mental discipline. We classicists are accustomed to claim much for the disciplinary value of language study, but it must be borne in mind that any such value can only come from the most rigid drilling in forms and syntax. The seductive short cut of 'reading for comprehension' can afford no more mental discipline than the empirical process by which we learn to speak and read English. The disciplinary value of the despised old-fashioned method of teaching languages lies in its concern with the building up of complex discourse from the primitive elements of forms and syntax. The detailed analysis of a problem in translation thus gives practice in the more difficult analysis of philosophical and social problems into their elementary principles.

It is with some hesitation that I venture to assert to champions of the Classics my belief that the study of mathematics in high school has a disciplinary value perhaps even greater than the study of languages. My reason for this belief is that mathematics, especially geometry, is *par excellence* the type of pure deductive reasoning, absolutely independent of empiric facts as no other study (apart from symbolic logic) can possibly be. It was hence with good reason that Plato considered mathematics the first essential in the education of his model citizen, and placed over the doorway of his Academy the inscription, "Let no one enter without a sound training in geometry."

In everyday life the manifestations of the sophistic point of view are so manifold that I must content myself with passing over such instances as commercialism, the so-called 'realism' of Germany, Italy, and Russia in international relations, and the less obvious sophistries of modern art, confining myself to the important field of government. Here a fateful contest is now going on throughout the world between the sophists and the Platonists, or men of principle. The conflict is most clear-cut in the opposition between constitutional government and government by dictatorship. You will say that a vast preponderance of American opinion is in this case plainly ranged against the sophists, but unfortunately the situation is not so simple as it seems. The majority do not in fact set up a true antithesis; they speak of 'dictatorship vs. democracy.' But the real antithesis of dictatorship is not democracy unqualified, but constitutional government. The essence of dictatorship is not the rule of a single individual as opposed to that of the people as a whole, but rather rule by decree, by fiat, by the temporary whim of the sovereign, without any permanent fundamental principles of law such as are embodied in a constitution. There may in fact exist a democratic dictatorship—what else is mob rule? And it is a fact too often ignored that as a matter of history, dictatorships have most frequently been set up, not by oligarchical parties, but by a so-called 'mandate of the people.' Such is certainly the case with regard to the great dictatorships of today, and it was true of the dictatorship of Julius Caesar, to mention but one example from ancient history.

Thus we find that opposition to dictatorship as such

is not actually as wide-spread as is sometimes thought. Few are actually opposed to the *principle* of dictatorship; it is rather specific dictators that are unpopular. So not a few Americans are violently antagonistic to Hitler and Mussolini, but quite acquiescent or even partial to Stalin, and a great many who also oppose Stalin view without alarm the unquestioned increasing encroachment of our own chief executive on the constitutional form of our government. We are constantly being urged to ignore or relinquish principles for the sake of a practical solution of temporary emergencies, to sacrifice fundamental rights defined and guaranteed in our constitution, in the name of so-called 'human rights,' a phrase with a strong sentimental appeal but one which begs the question, for analysis reveals that those who employ the expression seldom mean anything but 'human needs.'

To all pleas for a consistent policy based on permanent principles the sophist scornfully replies: "But changing conditions must be met with new attitudes; this is a world of change,"—as if that in itself were a modern discovery. As a matter of fact the world of change was the first philosophical problem to engage the attention of the human mind, but those pioneers of the intellect, the early Greek philosophers, saw clearly that the changing world itself was illusory, and unintelligible except on the assumption of a permanent unchanging first principle. Conditions *do* change, but the principles which underlie them and which must be utilized in coping with them are unchanging. Truth itself does not change. There is no such thing as a 'new' truth; there can only be a newly discovered truth, and if a so-called 'new idea' is inconsistent with fundamental principles, it is demonstrated by the simple mathematical process of *reductio ad absurdum* to be not a truth but a falsehood.

Such at any rate was Plato's belief, and if I have not concealed my own partisanship in the controversy, I harbor no delusion that I have presented a case for the Platonic view; such was not my intention; indeed I doubt whether anyone can improve on Plato's own defense of his position. I have merely sought to point out that most of the bitterest controversies of modern thought may be reduced to the essential difference of viewpoint which existed between Plato and the sophists, and that if we are to avoid confused thinking, we must recognize that Protagoras and Adolf Hitler, John Dewey and John L. Lewis, the Philistine business man and the New Dealer, the progressive educationist and the materialist, the pseudo-scientist and the sentimentalist, are all birds of a feather in that they value utility more than principle, the phenomenon more than the idea, the transitory more than the eternal.

I should like to close with this hint to the believer in principles: the number of fundamental truths, like the axioms and postulates of mathematics, is necessarily small, and it is likely that most of them have been discovered and formulated by this time. I suspect, in fact, that there are very few which were overlooked by Plato and Aristotle, and this, to my mind, is the most cogent argument for the study of classical literature. Outside the limited province of the natural sciences, modern subjects can but supply us with new problems; the

materials for their solution are to be found largely in the ancient thinkers. And in addition, the study of the classics provides the best corrective for the sophistic habit of mind, for the literature of Greece is by and large, in spite of some sophistic influence, still a fairly faithful expression, however informal, of the Platonic point of view, and though this outlook was not naturally congenial to the Roman temperament, still the influence of Greece made it the dominant note in Latin reflective literature, also, so that if 'the classical attitude towards life' means anything, it means an unshaken faith in the life of reason, a determined search for eternal fundamental principles, and a rigid adherence to them when found.

Virgil at Orchard's Bay

BY JOHN H. TAYLOR, S. J.
Alma College, Alma, California

If the Muses have smiled sweetly on Alfred Noyes in his garden at Orchard's Bay on the Isle of Wight, perhaps it is because the island is by tradition the English Parnassus, or maybe it is because the garden itself is so full of classical associations. Anyhow, it is here that Mr. Noyes has produced a little volume¹ of prose and poetry in which he rambles over many fields of human knowledge in his delightful and provocative manner.

But what interests us most is what Mr. Noyes has to say about Virgil in the comments he has scattered throughout the twenty-eight essays of this book. The study of classical literature has been so monopolized in our day by deep-browed and laborious scholars, that it is now a rare novelty when a distinguished poet undertakes to comment on a poet of ancient Rome. We should be predisposed to respect Mr. Noyes's interpretation of the Roman 'lord of language' if we have ever been moved by the strains of *The Highwayman* or the *Tales of a Mermaid Tavern*. And though we may not associate the exuberant spirit of Mr. Noyes's work with Virgil's high seriousness and *lacrimae rerum*, we do know that he can sing *paulo majora*, as he did in *The Strong City*.

The tract of forty acres on Orchard's Bay must be very much in the spirit of the farm at Mantua. It seems that Alfred Noyes likes best the beauties of nature that Virgil has woven into his lines. Like Virgil he studies nature at first-hand, and he decries those poets who

Distil a thousand summers into books
And die of drought among their own fresh brooks.

As we read on we seem to hear an invitation to Orchard's Bay:

Huc ades, o Meliboe: caper tibi salvus et haedi:
Et si quid cessare potes, requiesce sub umbra.

And to this we gladly respond:

Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi
Silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.
Tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.

Yes, there are beech trees under whose shade we may idle, and 'the woods are full of the music of the ring-dove,' whose song reminds our host of Virgil's onomatopoeia:

Nec tamen interea raucae, tua cura, palumbes,
Nec gemere aerea cessabit turtur ab ulmo.

There are roses and ivy and Hybla's bees and 'storm-loving pines with radiant sea-spray wet.' And to the northeast is an orchard where you may walk with the children to gather apples; and of course this recalls to Mr. Noyes's mind (and ours) that perfect little picture that Virgil sketched in the eighth *Eclogue*:

Saepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
(Dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem.
Alter ab undecimo tum me iam acceperat annus,
Iam fragilis poteram ab terra contingere ramos.

There is a vineyard and a little farm, in both of which Virgil would have been at home. On either side are tall wooded promontories; and 'southward dreams the sea' whose many woods Virgil loved to describe in the *Aeneid*, though its murmurs were far from his Mantuan farm.

Most curious of all is a little Greek temple erected in Virgil's honor, so Mr. Noyes tells us, by Sir Richard Worsley in the eighteenth century. The present owner has allowed red roses to climb up its pillars, and the place serves as a playhouse for the children in wet weather, but it still breathes the spirit of Virgil:

Virgil, the crown of leaves upon his brow,
The sad immortal face, with sightless eyes
Gazing between the tall dark cypresses
And rose-twined pillars, to a wave as blue,
As calm and quiet, as the Italian wave
That sleeps below his tomb.

O, Meliboeus,

A god, a god prepared this happy place!

If one should object that it is a desecration to turn such a spot into a playroom for children, Mr. Noyes answers that there are lines in the *Eclogues* to indicate that Virgil would want them there:

Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem.

And we might add in confirmation the poignant words of Andromache to little Ascanius to whom she presents a scarf woven with her own hands:

Cape dona extrema tuorum,
O mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago.
Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat;
Et nunc aequali tecum pubesceret aevo.

The temple suggests a fantasy on the eighteenth century Tityrus and Amaryllis whose memory lingers round it still, and the Virgil of Orchard's Bay tells the story in prose and verse in the chapter entitled "The Rose and the Cypress."

But the reveries in the island garden are not without their touches of homely realism. If Mr. Noyes frequently raises his gaze from the fading beauty of his garden to the undying beauty of the world beyond, he always manages to keep his feet on the good earth. If he often stretches out his hands, *ripae ulterioris amore*, he always lets you know that he is jealously guarding his forty acres on this side of the stream. You are very much aware of this when, in the chapter called "Politics and the Fig Tree," he laments the intrusion of government into the life of the farmer. The official who came all the way from Birmingham by train, boat, and taxicab, to ask some questions about a herd of Guernsey cows and collect seven shillings and sixpence was as welcome as the *advena* who took over the farm of Menalcas in the ninth *Eclogue*. And as Mr. Noyes paid the fee, he probably muttered something like the *quod nec vertat bene* of Moeris.

The chapter entitled "Onorate L'Altissimo Poeta" in which Alfred Noyes discusses the Messianic content of the fourth *Eclogue* will probably suggest the query: "Why attempt to go over a question that has been handled so exhaustively by competent scholars? Can Noyes add anything to all that has been said on the subject?" I think he can and does, for he brings to the question what is most needed—the imaginative insight of a poet who is keenly sensitive to all the more subtle undertones of Virgil's poetry.

Briefly his thesis is this: The *Eclogue* is Messianic, not in the sense that Virgil was consciously prophesying the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem; but influenced indirectly by the prophecies of Isaias, whose content found their way into the Sibylline oracles, he was fortelling in a poetic way the coming of a new order of things.

Of course there is nothing new about this explanation, but there are many modern scholars who do not accept it. Mr. Noyes comes gallantly to the defense of the Fathers of the Church who are said to have looked upon Virgil as a prophet; but perhaps that defense is just a little misleading, for it was by no means the common belief of the Fathers that Virgil prophesied the birth of Christ.

Lactantius, it is true, had taken the *Eclogue* as a prophecy, but he applied it to the second coming of Christ.² However, in spite of his ability as a rhetorician and scholar, Lactantius is not really representative of the Christian thought of his day. In an address which Constantine is supposed to have delivered 'to the assembly of the saints' (a work which is appended to the *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius), we find a detailed explanation of the 'prophecy' developed in the most fantastic manner and applied to Christ and His Church. The author of this address thinks that Virgil was consciously prophesying the coming of Christ and the Christian religion, but that he veiled his thought in the imagery of the classic poets in order not to offend the ruling powers in Rome.³ No one would consider this an expression of patristic thought. St. Jerome, we know, had no patience with any of these explanations. *Puerilia sunt haec*, he said scornfully, *et circulatorum ludo similia*.⁴

It is to St. Augustine, then, that we must turn, not only because of the prestige he enjoyed during the Middle Ages and still enjoys today, but because he was the first to attempt a reasonable explanation of Virgil's Messianic vision. He attributes Virgil's description to the Sibylline oracles, taking verse 5 as a clear indication of this dependence:

Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas.

With regard to the oracle, he thinks it possible that there was some sort of preternatural inspiration:

Quoniam fortassis illa vates aliquid de unico Salvatore in spiritu audierat, quod necesse habuit confiteri.⁵

The *te duce* of verse 13 is referred to Christ, the *sceleris vestigia nostri* to original sin, and the *Assyrium amomum* (verse 25) to grace.⁶ With regard to these allusions to original sin and grace, St. Augustine is apparently adapting the words to a meaning which he knew they never had. Even in applying the 'prophecy' to Christ he is cautious:

Poetice quidem, quia in alterius adumbrata persona, veraciter tamen, si ad ipsum [Christum] referas.⁷

But can we follow this interpretation? Certainly it is not necessary to have recourse to a special inspiration of the oracle (which Augustine suggested only as a possible explanation), for the penetration of Jewish thought into the Roman world is acknowledged by scholars today, and it is not unlikely that the educated were familiar, directly or indirectly, with the Messianic aspirations of the Hebrew people, especially with the prophecies of Isaiah. Although Virgil had learned Alexandrine Greek from his tutor Epidius, there is no evidence that he had seen the Septuagint. Still, it has been suggested that the new Sibylline prophecies, which were brought to Rome from the East after the old ones had been destroyed by fire, contained images borrowed from Hebrew prophecy. It has also been pointed out that there were 8,000 Jews in Rome at the time of Augustus and that Herod was on friendly terms with Pollio. Somehow, it seems, the connection between the new order to come and the birth of a divine babe must have filtered in from Jewish sources, for this is the one element in Virgil's description that cannot be traced to the tradition of Greek and Latin poetry.⁸

But all this is getting away from Orchard's Bay and Mr. Noyes's theme. His explanation of the prophecy (if we can in some sense call it such) goes right to the heart of the matter when he writes:

The beauty and wonder of poetry arise from the very fact which they [the critics] seek to disregard—that poetry is an expression of something far deeper than the conscious mind can formulate. The poet's eye may be on a certain object, but he sees far beyond it. . . . He [Virgil] would probably have declared, like Browning, that the gods and himself knew what it meant when he wrote it; but now, the gods alone knew.

This does not necessarily mean that Virgil received some preternatural illumination from heaven. But his poetic apprehension of the subject—call it his vision, intuition, realization—was in a broad sense an inspiration. It was certainly a marvellous coincidence that, when he undertook to sing of the new order of things at the conclusion of the peace of Brundisium, there should well up unwittingly in his memory the description of the Messianic kingdom which seems to have come to him indirectly from Isaiah. Conceiving the new age in a vision which came to him partly from without by reason of the golden age descriptions of the poets and the Messianic predictions of the prophets, and partly from within by reason of the deep longings of his keenly sensitive nature, he did write a prophecy which turned out to be remarkably true. How he did all this while unaware of what he was really saying, Noyes describes in the beautiful simile of Dante: Virgil is like a man carrying behind his back a light which illumines the path of others who follow but does not light his own steps. Does not Virgil himself in the fourth *Eclogue* hint at something beyond ordinary rational knowledge in his poetic conception of his subject, when he expresses the hope that in his old age he may have the *spiritus*⁹ to narrate the deeds of the boy?

All this may be very poetic and intangible, but after all Virgil was writing poetry and not prose. And I think that Mr. Noyes in interpreting Virgil has come

just a little closer to the truth than the critics who scorn 'medieval superstition.'

Virgil has indeed come to Orchard's Bay, and 'all the charm of all the Muses' has flowered once again in the reveries of this little book. We are glad that Mr. Noyes has shared them with us. There is no *Altertums-wissenschaft* here, but the Mantuan is surely more at home in the graceful ease of the island garden than he would be in more academic surroundings. If we would feel his perennial charm it is in such an atmosphere that we must read him.

¹ Orchard's Bay; Sheed and Ward, N. Y. 1939.

² *Div. Inst.*, 7, 24 (CV 19, 661).

³ *Oratio*, 19 (CB 7, 182).

⁴ *Ep.* 53, 7 (CV 54, 454).

⁵ *Ep.* 258, 5 (PL 33, 1073); cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 10, 27 (PL 41, 305-306).

⁶ *Locis citatis* and *Ep.* 137, 12 (CV 44, 114).

⁷ *De Civ. Dei*, 10, 27.

⁸ But Père Lagrange has found some hints of this idea in Oriental inscriptions. See his *Le prétendu messianisme de Virgile*, *Revue Biblique*, 31 (1922) 570-571.

⁹ *Spiritus*, 'ingenii vis vigorque poeticus'; C. G. Heyne. H. R. Fairclough translates it as 'inspiration.'

Ad Divam Nicotinam

(Pace Horati)

Quam divam potius te, Nicotina era,
Collaudare decet, quae colis insulam
Praeoptatam aliis Hesperii maris,
Seu poscas fidibus, carmine seu velis?

Tu curas misero pectore dimoves;
Spes et tu revocas mentibus anxii.
Terrarum domini membraque barbari
Pietati te pariter sollicitant pree.

Quem non mirifice post epulas tuo
Adventu recreas? Ingenio admoves
Tormentum leviter, dux sapientiae
Dulcis. Quid sine te non gravius pati?

Tandem, oro, statuas ducere naribus
Tus fumans penitus, nam foliis tibi
Flavis ara calet plurima feticilis;
Nec fragrant violae nec rosa suavius.

Semper virginibus vel pueris nefas
Ritus scire deae, nec veniat licet
Si quis caeruleum palluit halitum.
Coetu verba procul tristitia pellite.

Large pone, puer, ligna super foco.
Nunc sermone juvat noctis amabilis
Horas nos vario degere posteri
Securos quia nos, alma dea, aspicias.

Ex Universitate Chicaginiensi
Scribebat Robertus J. Bonner

Every Roman writer was a conscious grammarian and a conscious stylist.—B. Farrington

Latin Grammar and Mind-Training

"We must be prepared to explain the significance of the deceptively simple and frequently meaningless phrase of 'mind-training.' Secondary school teachers often defend their Latin curriculum by saying that Latin and Cicero train the mind. And how? By exercising the mental powers of the student, first, in the perception of relationships between words (*analysis*); secondly, in the accurate judgment of their integral significance (*crisis*); and lastly, in the re-expression of those same—but ever-diversified—patterns in the vernacular (*synthesis*).'' (Jos. T. Clark, S.J.)

